

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 252
By Wilder

A RESOLUTION To honor and commend Gus's World Famous
Fried Chicken and the Bonner family.

WHEREAS, It is fitting that this General Assembly pause to specially recognize those local eating establishments and the people behind them who, through their hard work, dedication, and integrity, have achieved a degree of culinary acclaim worthy of recognition; and

WHEREAS, Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken, one such commendable establishment, and the Bonner family, the proprietors of the restaurant, have been providing the people of Mason and surrounding communities with, quite possibly, the world's greatest fried chicken for almost one-half century; and

WHEREAS, Since the restaurant's original incarnation as "Maggie's Side Order," Gus's has developed a loyal following throughout the region, relying on word-of-mouth publicity to garner new customers; more recently, however, the restaurant has gained wider acclaim through both print and television media; and

WHEREAS, Earlier this year, *GQ* magazine listed Gus's as one of the top 10 restaurants in the world worth flying to for a meal; *GQ*'s designation and WKNO-TV's *Tennessee Crossroads*' spotlighting of the restaurant have almost doubled the patronage at Gus's; and

WHEREAS, In 1953, Napoleon and Maggie Bonner opened up "Maggie's Side Order" in a shop on Mason's town square; during the days of segregation, white customers came to the back door to purchase fried chicken; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, the restaurant moved to its current location in Mason on U.S. 70, about 40 miles north of Memphis; after the deaths of Napoleon and Maggie in 1983, the restaurant was inherited by their son, Vernon "Gus" Vanderbilt Bonner, who renamed the restaurant "Gus's," after a nickname of his, and ran the establishment with his wife, Gertrude; and

WHEREAS, Now retired, Vernon and Gertrude come in only on Fridays, having passed the majority of the responsibility of running Gus's on to the next generation, their sons, Terry and Tarus; and

WHEREAS, During the week, Terry and his wife, Ann, run the business, while Tarus takes over on the weekends; and

WHEREAS, Eschewing the frills and amenities found in fancier restaurants, Gus's maintains a simple yet appealing, atmosphere: a handful of booths along the walls provide seating, along with a few tables balanced in between; a jukebox provides occasional background music, although more often, customers rely on the constant buzz of the small television in the open kitchen; and

WHEREAS, The restaurant's menu adheres to the no-frills aesthetic of the interior; Gus's offers fried chicken, white or dark meat, served with a choice of beans, slaw, fries, dirty rice, or potato salad; for dessert, they offer pie: chess, coconut, pecan, or sweet potato; and

WHEREAS, The success of the restaurant's reliance on simplicity is evident through the sheer volume—1,600 pounds--of chicken being sold by Gus's every week; back when Napoleon and Maggie were running the restaurant, they sold about 32 pieces of chicken a week; and

WHEREAS, While the Bonners are content with the amount of success they have achieved thus far, they are still interested in the possibility of franchising the restaurant; however, they are unwilling to reveal the secret that makes their fried chicken "world famous"; instead, the Bonner family would prefer to produce the batter, which is the key to the popularity of the chicken, and then ship it to the franchise locations; and

WHEREAS, Steadfast in their refusal to divulge the family secret to their famous fried chicken, the Bonners remain ever alert to the sly attempts of customers to discern just what it is that makes Gus's fried chicken so good, once even playfully rebuffing the attempts of a customer, claiming to be from the Health Department, who called in asking about specific ingredients in the batter; and

WHEREAS, Aware of the secret recipe's integral role in the success of Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken, Vernon offers a mischievous hint to the chicken's success: "We put in something that will make you beautiful and something that will make you sexy, but ain't got no Viagra in there. We just try to make it as good as possible"; and

WHEREAS, It is the privilege of this General Assembly to salute the accomplishments of the Bonner family, a family who truly represents the spirit and integrity characteristic of true Tennesseans, such spirit and integrity manifested in their adherence to simplicity, purity, and quality in the preparation and serving of delectable home-style food; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we congratulate the Bonner family for their success with Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken, honor them for the admirable quality of their establishment, thank them

for the quality service and excellent fried chicken they have provided since 1953, and wish them success in all future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.